TRANSLATIONS IMITATIONS AND A FEW ORIGINALS

FABIUS M. RAY

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TRANSLATIONS, IMITATIONS,

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FABIUS M. RAY.

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TO THE ELIANS.

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TRANSLATIONS, IMITATIONS,

AND A FEW ORIGINALS.

That the glow of its fires I almost feel,
And the people that live in it seem so real,
And yet is in fact more distant far
Than the light that is born of the farthest star.

'Tis said that the witch-wives ride abroad,
On broomstick-steeds, with fell accord,
On stormy nights, when the moon through dread,
In sable clouds hath veiled her head,
And the myriad stars are every one
Away in space with the absent sun,—
Intent upon unhallowed deeds,
Having drunk their tea of noxious weeds,
While the peaceful blaze that the winds move not,
Under the merrily seething pot,
Seems ever as calm and unconcerned
As if the winds knew not it burned.

But all I see, as I list the storm,
In my chimney-nook, so snug and warm,
Is a fire that burns midst the eddying snow,
And the winds move not, howe'er they blow,
So like my own that I can but think
The witches' tea is but harmless drink,
And the witches themselves a folk maligned,
Figments of faith and fear combined;
And the fires that blaze, when the wind is high,
Out in the night so peacefully,

Were only meant by the powers of good,
To cheer with their warmth our mortal blood,
And minister, thus, to the true delight
We always feel of a wintry night,
When out of the casement, peering, we see
Their peaceful light on the wind-swept lea.

THE DYING HEROES.

FROM THE GERMAN OF UHLAND.

BEFORE the Dane the Swedish army flees
To the wild seas.
The wagons rumble far. In white moonlight
Gleam bayonets bright.
On bloody field, amid the dead and dying,
Young Sven, the fair, and gray-haired Ulf are lying.

SVEN.

O why, my Father, doth the Norn delight
Young hopes to blight?
No more a mother's hand, in joy or ruth,
My locks shall smooth.
Long will my loved one look with straining eyes,
And wait my coming 'neath the starlit skies.

ULF.

And they will weep, and when the north star gleams,
See us in dreams.
But be consoled; soon must the hearts that ache
In sorrow break.
Then, at the board where the immortals sup,
Your Love will hand to you the brimming cup.

SVEN.

I had of late begun a lofty strain
Wherein I fain
Had told how heroes in the olden time
Wrought deeds sublime.
But now my harp hangs silent and unstrung,
Nor shall the strain in Odin's halls be sung.

ULF.

All-Father's grand and lofty mansion gleams
In bright sunbeams.
The stars move under it; there, all the day
The storm winds play.
Therein, ere long, shall we with loved ones sit;
O then resume thy song and finish it.

SVEN.

O why, my Father, doth the Norn delight
Young hopes to blight?
No valiant deed is writ upon the field
Of my poor shield.
Twelve awful judges rule the realms above:
How shall I hope their obdurate hearts to move?

ULF.

Full oft doth one all other deeds outweigh —
For such care they.

It is for one's own fatherland to die
That counts on high.
Look yonder! how our country's foes retreat;
The heavens are oped for us; O, death is sweet!

THE BURIAL AT SEA.

THREE days a shark had followed our course;
We saw his fins rise out of the tide,
As oft, when the wind abated its force,
He leisurely swam by the vessel's side.

So we knew, that morn when the old man died,
That the monster waited in our sleuth,
Like the slow-hound on the mountain side,
With sharp and eager tooth.

And this was the reason the shark was near,
Said the old forecastle men;
He had seen from the deep, and seen full clear,
What was veiled from human ken.

Therefore he knew full better than we,
That soon he would have his wish,
For all that the sailors throw into the sea
Belongs by right to the fish.

That afternoon the sea was calm;
No sound, no stir upon the ocean,
Save where the lines, on the long yardarm,
Swung to and fro with listless motion.

The sun shone clear from a cloudless sky,
And all the billowy swells between
The sea lay smooth, and placidly
Did glisten in the sunlight's sheen.

Full forty leagues off Fortune Bay,
Our good ship lay upon the deep,
And drifted idly as she lay,
As drifts the white-winged swan asleep.

And there to a watery grave was given
That aged man, who had thought to rest
In his own dear native isle, well-shriven,
With shamrocks growing on his breast.

A simple service lay lips read,
What time the plank on the gunwale rested;
Old ocean then received its dead,
With ballast in old sail invested.

A fresh wind rose in a landward cloud,
And sped us on our way;
Each brace was taut, and filled, each shroud;
The shark forsook us from that day.

THE RETURN OF SPRING.

HORACE, BOOK I, ODE IV.

COLD winter is gone, and the mild west wind
Has melted the snows away,
And the boatman lowers his boat from the beach
And launches it on the bay.
No longer the herds are mewed in the stalls,
Nor the plowman sits in his chimney-nook,
Nor the willows gleam in the white hoar-frost,
Beside the meadow brook.
Now Venus waits 'neath the mellowing moon,
Alone with the triple Graces;
And Vulcan sweats at his Lemnian forge,
Intent on the Thunderer's praises.

'Tis the time when myrtle wreaths entwine
The rosy locks of youth,
And wild flowers leap in Flora's lap,
And greet the fruitful South.
And Faunus owns, in shady groves,
The tribute of a lamb,
Or, better still, a bleating kid,
The firstling of its dam.

L. of C.

But alas! pale Death no cottage spares,
Nor yet the kingly hall,
But moweth with relentless scythe,
For harvest, each and all.
O Sextius mine, thou ne'er canst know
What hold the Fates in store,
What dangers in the darkness lurk
By the Plutonian shore.
Thou may'st not win the wine at dice
While Charon's boat sails by,
Nor bask in lovely maidens' eyes
When Lycidas is nigh.

THE GOLDSMITH'S DAUGHTER.

FROM THE GERMAN OF UHLAND.

A GOLDSMITH in his workshop stood,
'Mongst pearls and rubies rare;
"Of all my jewels is none that could
Compare with thee, Helena,
My daughter, dear as fair."

Enter a well-dressed cavalier:
"Good morning, my sweet maid,
Good morning, neighbor goldsmith dear;
Pray make my bride a golden wreath,
With costly gems inlaid."

When he had made the golden wreath,
And hung it in the light,
Helena came with bated breath,
And placed it on her snowy arm,
Whilst tears bedimmed her sight:

"Ah! happy, happy is the bride
Shall wear this precious toy;
But would the knight unbend his pride
To give a wreath of flowers to me,
Then might I die for joy!"

Next day came back the cavalier;
The golden wreath he eyed:
"Make me, O neighbor goldsmith dear,
A golden ring with diamonds set,
For my own lovely bride."

And when the golden ring was done,
And gleamed with diamonds rare,
And sparkled in the noonday sun,
Helena placed it half way on
Her own white finger there:

"Ah! happy, happy is the bride
Shall wear this precious toy;
But would the knight unbend his pride
To give a lock of his own hair
To me, I'd die of joy!"

Next day came back the cavalier;
The golden ring he eyed:
"Indeed most fine, O goldsmith dear,
The presents you have made
For my own lovely bride.

"That I may see how well they fit,
A moment come this way,
My fair young girl, for not a whit
More fair than you, is she for whom
I hold these gifts this day."

It was upon a Sunday morn,
Hence must Helena own,
Her wondrous beauty to adorn,
She had put on her best attire,
Her go-to-meeting gown.

Her cheeks with shame all rosy-red,
Before him she doth stand;
He puts the wreath upon her head,
Upon her finger puts the ring,
And takes her by the hand.

"Helena sweet, Helena dear,
The jest is at an end;
Thou art the bride without a peer,
For whom both golden wreath and ring,
From first I did intend.

"'Mongst gold and pearls and rubies rare,
Hast thou from childhood grown;
And now thou art a woman fair
Whom I would lead to honors high,
And proudly call my own."

HYMN TO FAUNUS.

HORACE, BOOK III, ODE XVIII.

O FAUNUS, whom the flying nymphs adore,
Vouchsafe, I pray, the sunshine of thy smile
Benignly to our waiting fields once more,
And to the herds that graze thereon meanwhile.

And, if to thee, at 'parting of the year,
A kid we bring and offerings of wine,
This know, — that, with devotion most sincere,
We lay our choicest gifts upon thy shrine.

The gladsome creatures in the fields disport,
When wintry nones come round, for love of thee;
And hereward, too, the husbandmen resort,
Like idle oxen from the yoke set free.

The wolf among the fearless lambs lies down;
Their ripened leaves the forests broadcast spread;
Meanwhile the dancing hind makes haste to own
The earth thrice worthy of his buoyant tread.

THEOSOPHIC.

HIGH and airy, clean and neat,
Under the barn-eaves, runs the street,
Where the swallows' adobe town is built.
Sheltered from weather and safe from harm,
Each cot within is nice and warm, —
Cushions of wool and couches of down, —
There never existed a cheerier town,
Go in quest of it where thou wilt.

No tables of stone, nor parchment rules,
Nor courts, nor churches, nor learnéd schools:
Nor monarch, nor monk, nor father confessor,
Nor peripatetic, nor tub-possessor;
Nor healer of flesh, nor writer of ditty,
Have place or use in the swallow city.

For little, indeed, is the real need
Of written law or preachéd word,
Where every bird is an upright bird,
And giveth that noble law the heed
Which Zeus in every heart writes deep,
The feet from devious paths to keep.

O man, who vauntest schemes to save
Thy fellow men from erring ways,

Why not unto the God that gave
The moral law return the praise,
And learn to own the simple truth,
That He, whose hand in its broad hollow,
Doth hold thee fast through joy and ruth,
Hath made man wise as well's the swallow?

SUNSET ON LOCH KATRINE.

IN the vale of gray Glenfinlas
Still the purpling heath-bells bloom,
And the timid partridge crouches
'Mid the tangled beds of broom.

But no more the wild MacGregor,
From the mountains bare and bold,
Bids his sovereign's laws defiance,
Like his warlike sires of old.

And no more the slogan echoes,
Or the pibroch wakes alarm;
Where once dwelt the outlawed Campbell,
Now is found the peaceful farm.

In its quiet vale Loch Katrine,
Queenliest of Scottish lakes,
Feels no motion save the ripple
Which our Highland oarsman makes.

Overhead towers Ben Venue,
Warm with sunset's dying flame;
And beside us, Ellen's Isle,
Once so welcome to the Graeme;

While below, the bristling Trosachs
In the beams of ebbing day,
Shutting in our nook of dreamland,
Keep the outer world at bay.

And reflected in the water,
Tree and rock so perfect seem,
Only Douglas' lovely daughter
Lacketh now our faery dream.

But the gathering shadows deepen,
And the dusk falls o'er the scene;
We must turn our footsteps landward,
While the night veils Loch Katrine.

In thy vale, O gray Glenfinlas,
They may never hear of me;
But the heath-clad shores of Katrine,
Will from hence my dreamland be.

THE VIOLET.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

A VIOLET in the meadow grew,
The bee alone its sweetness knew,
It was a darling violet!
The shepherd maiden chanced that way
Singing a song, so blithe and gay,
Her shoeless feet with spring dews wet.

The violet thought: "O could I be
The fairest flower upon the lea,
If only for a little while,
Until her sinless hand had pressed
Me softly to her own sweet breast,
O, for the briefest little while!"

But, O, alas! alas indeed!
The maiden gave it not her heed,
But crushed the tender violet;
It drooped and died, rejoicing still;
And if I die how gladly will
I die like it
At my own loved one's feet!

TO THE TRAILING ARBUTUS.

EPIGÆA REPENS.

O EDELWEISS of the April woods,
Pray, why so coy and maiden shy,
Hiding in lonely neighborhoods,
'Neath last year's leaves now crisp and dry?

The hare has doffed his snow-white coat,
And leaps again in brown attire,
And the wood-thrush pours from flute-like throat,
Such notes as to the stars aspire.

But safe in her covert of withered leaves,
With a gleam in her eyes that droop alway,
The coy arbutus in silence weaves
The pink of the dawn with the noontide's gray.

On the silver birch and the bronzéd beech,
And all the race of the forest trees,
One hears the babel of wordless speech,
Th' incessant croon of laboring bees.

But, sweeter than all the buds that ope
On bourgeoning trees in the sun's warm rays,
Are the modest flowers that shyly grope
Under the leaves these April days.

DEATH-KNELLS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF UHLAND.

I.

THE SERENADE.

WHAT strains are these, O mother dear,
That reach me in my sleep,
Until I wake with ravished ear,
For very joy, and weep?

I nothing hear and nothing see,
So rest in slumber mild.
They bring no serenade to thee,
To-night, my poor sick child.

'Tis like no earthly music, this,
I list with such delight.
Ah see, a seraph-choir it is;
O mother dear, good night.

II.

THE ORGAN.

O NEIGHBOR, once again for me,
Upon the organ play,
Perchance the old familiar strains
Will charm this pain away.

So spake the suffering invalid,
A woman weak and wan;
The neighbor played as ne'er before,
The ivory keys upon.

It was a sweet and rapturous strain
He woke with touch so light,
And while he played that weary soul
Rose on its heavenward flight.

III.

THE THROSTLE.

I WILL unto the woodlands go,
And all the summer long,
Will listen while the throstle fills
The thickets with its song.

To please a child they caught the bird,
And in a cage confined.
A captive now, it would not sing,
But for its freedom pined.

But when one day the child implores
A song, with tearful eyes,
The bird uplifts its voice and sings,
Then instant falls and dies.

TO LYDIA.

HORACE, BOOK III, ODE IX.

HORACE.

WHEN I, of swains most fortunate,
Reclined in thy voluptuous arms,
I envied not the blissful state
Of Persia's king 'midst orient palms.

LYDIA.

Before thy fickle heart forgot
To beat for me, and me alone,
I envied not the happy lot
Of any queen upon her throne.

HORACE.

'Twas Chloë, with her dulcet mouth,
Who kissed my senses all away;
And I had died for her, forsooth,
So much I lived in one short day.

LYDIA.

Calaïs with the shining locks,
He stole my simple heart away;
Such beauty his as only mocks
The fairest girl's by Ischia's bay.

HORACE.

What if, as often comes to pass,
  Once more the old love should return,
And I, forsaking Chloë, lass,
  For Lydia's fond embrace should yearn?

LYDIA.

My heart beats wildly as the wave,
  When glowing Auster sweeps the main,
And life or death I fain would brave
  To clasp thee to my breast again.

IN MAY.

'TIS merry May again, and mother earth
Doth feel new life her quickened pulses thrill;
Ten thousand blossoms bursting into birth
The air with their commingled fragrance fill;
And all the breezes, heavy with perfume,
Bring tidings of their advent everywhere;
Meanwhile the bee o'erlooks the single bloom
And gloats in sweetness as he roams in air.

And lightsome symphonies, in odors sweet,
Are rung by pallid lilies of the vale,
Beside the sylvan brook where fairies meet
To list the airs, for human ears must fail.
The blind boy arms with fatal dart his bow
And fires his random shafts to left and right;
Where late was coldness, now is all aglow,
And e'en the Quaker thrush feels love's delight.

Pale passion flowers, — let poets call them so, —
But passionate, in sooth, are all fair flowers,
Of whatsoever hue, where'er they grow,
First fruits of troth that's truest, sun and shower's
O sweet delight! so near akin to pain,
And yet so full of soul-entrancing pleasure;
Poor heart, an were it sin, thou 'dst not refrain
From joy that waiteth thee in fullest measure.

AT MIDNIGHT.

FROM THE GERMAN OF MÖRIKE.

NOW night hath risen o'er the land
And touched all eyes with unseen wand,
And morn and eve from her dim couch she sees
At equipoise in golden balances;
Meanwhile, upon time's vast and viewless sea,
The wild waves sing an ever merry glee
Of day that is to be,
The new and untried day.

The old, old lullaby of sleep,
She minds it not, her dreams are deep;
But on the welkin's crystal cup of blue
She hears the passing hours rung out anew,
E'en while upon eternity's broad sea
The waves are singing, singing merrily,
Of day that is to be,
The new and untried day.

AD SODALES.

HORACE, BOOK I, ODE XXVII.

ABOVE the cups ordained for festive uses,
To quarrel were too like the barbarous Thracian;
Such brutal manners lay aside; the grape's red juices
To Bacchus pour, for him a fit oblation.

How much the Parthian dagger militates
Against these glowing lights and sparkling wine!
O pray, less tumult make, my roystering mates,
As on these silken couches you recline.

And I must, too, the sour Falernian quaff?
Pray tell me, brother of Megilla, why?
What anguish in my flesh should make me laugh?
With what sweet torture should I wish to die?

Does inclination halt? On no condition,
But this alone, I'll pledge thee in such wine;
Whatever goddess holds thee in commission,
Some little sins, dear boy, are surely thine.

Whate'er thy secret be, in confidence
Come whisper it into these friendly ears.
O wretched youth! with what strange want of sense
One by Charybdis into Scylla steers;

Till now, nor witch, magician, nor divinity
Can from thy sin's dread consequence absolve thee;
Nor even Pegasus can set thee free
From the Chimæra's net that doth involve thee.

THE SUN HATH SET IN CLOUDS TO-NIGHT.

FROM THE FRENCH OF VICTOR HUGO.

THE sun hath set in clouds to-night,
And storms will come to-morrow,
But time will ever take delight
To plow its onward furrow.

The days and years roll on apace,
O'er sea and land forever,
No power can stay their onward race,
And they will come back never.

The oceans deep, the mountains bold,
The trees with branches hoary,
Still tell the tale they've always told,
The same unvaried story.

But I who bow my head each day,
And freeze in sunshine glowing,
Must still pursue my weary way,
And none will heed my going.

DIOGENES.

NO shelter from the noonday sun have I
But this poor hut the wits nickname a tub;
And here I sit and watch the crowd go by,
And note how, in their eager haste, they rub,
The one against the other, in the way,
And fret and fume about, the livelong day.

These men and boys on great things sternly bent,
Indulge in ribald jests at my expense;
My life, they deem, is most unwisely spent
In poverty and rags and indolence,
Because I make no effort to possess
A few small oboli, of more or less

Accorded worth. I could not eat the coin,
Had I huge coffers filled, nor better think;
Whilst some poor starveling might my horde purloin,
And thus his feet be stayed upon the brink
Of wise resolve to die by suicide;
And so, with cause, should curse me till he died.

Thus, being poor, I feel myself full rich;
I clothe me not in overmuch attire;
To scoop up water from the wayside ditch,
I have my hollow hand. If I desire
More food than falleth to my lot, what then?
I have my wants, and so have other men.

But when my wants are told, I am not poor;
For I am richer than these Mammon-slaves,
Who, if they had the earth, would still want more;
Who cheat among themselves, the arrant knaves,
And for their fellows' feet lay hidden snares,
And fain would ease them of their precious wares.

True wealth may not be meted by its bulk,
By acres broad and lordly ships at sea,
This house of mine may look a sorry hulk,
But yet 'twere worth the golden Ind to me;
Within its walls I rest and am content;
Because my wants are few, I'm opulent.

AMBITION.

I WOULD that I had been the first
To think some thoughts which other men have thought;
I would that I had been the first
To do some deeds which other men have wrought.

I love the best a life of ease;
And in my calmer moments think it wise
To be with all the world at peace,
Knowing that at the last one only dies.

Sometimes, however, as I look
Well out upon the battle-field of life,
I long to gird the armour on,
And prove myself a hero in the strife.

For in my human breast, I know,
A spirit dwells, refusing to be laid;
The demon mortals name unrest,
Whose stern behest must ever be obeyed.

And when its spell is over me,
I long to hear the multitude's acclaim;
And then I wish that mine had been
The thought or deed shall always live in fame.

THE SHEPHERD.

FROM THE GERMAN OF UHLAND.

THE shepherd swain doth come so nigh,
When he would pass the castle gate;
The princess from the balcony
Looks down with yearning great.

She calls to him with sweet delight:
"O, might I go down there to thee!
Thy lambs they are so snowy white,
And frisk about the lea."

And thus the shepherd answer makes:
"O, couldst thou but come down to me!
So rosy red are both thy cheeks,
Thine arms so fair to see."

Henceforth, with beating heart doth he
Each early morn, as he comes near,
Gaze upward to the balcony,
To see his love appear.

And when the swain her thus doth greet:
"O, welcome, princess most divine,"
She makes him answer, soft and sweet:
"I thank thee, shepherd mine."

The winter sped, the spring came back,
  The flowers 'gan blooming as before;
The shepherd walked the old-time track,
  But she came back no more.

He calls to her so piteously:
  "O, welcome, princess most divine."
A hollow voice comes from on high:
  "Adieu, O shepherd mine!"

THOU SHALT SLEEP SOMETIME.

FROM THE GERMAN OF ALBERT TRAEGER.

THOUGH tears each night thy pillow wet,
And hot thy sleepless eyelids be,
Do not despair; sweet slumber yet
The faithful years will bring to thee.

Yield not to sorrow's hopeless thrall;
Time holdeth many things in store;
Four boards it hath, both thin and small,
Thy narrow house forevermore.

And somewhere, too, a hand doth wait
To close for thee the weary eyes,
When thou dost sleep, or soon or late,
To waken 'neath serener skies.

'Tis death will bring surcease of care,
When but a few short years go by;
To bide thy time then, bravely dare;
No mortal is too poor to die.

TO ÆLIUS LAMIA.

HORACE, BOOK I, ODE XXVI.

THE Muses' friend these many years,
I mind it not, though Boreas rave,
But fling unto the winds my fears,
My cares unto the Cretan wave.
Ye maids whom crystal founts delight,
And streams from Helicon that flow,
A chaplet weave of flowers, like light,
And bind it on my Ælius' brow;
And, while the strains that sound his praise
Flow from the costly Lesbian lyre,
Let every Muse her voice upraise,
And sing as sings no mortal choir.

THE WOODLANDS IN MAY.

NOW Jack-in-the-Pulpit extendeth his palms,
And preacher-like maketh his mute invocation;
And all the wide woodlands are vocal with psalms,
The wild birds are singing in full congregation.

TO THE CICADA.

AFTER ANACREON.

BLESSED little wingéd thing!
That at eventide dost sing,
And for nurture drinkest dew
From the iris' chalice blue;
Deftly as the sweet bee-queen,
Dost with feet thy pinions preen;
Then in flight thy fleet course wingest,
And ever, in thy flying, singest.

With the husbandmen thou dwellest;
Since, prophetic, thou foretellest
If the spring-time promise sure,
From all harm thou art secure.

Yes, indeed, the Muses love thee:
None doth Phœbus place above thee,
Hears entranced thy silver voice,
Thou his first and latest choice.
Never shall old age surprise thee,
By the poets likened wisely
To the angels' deathless brood,
For thou hast nor flesh nor blood.

Free from every care and sorrow,
Never anxious for the morrow,
Seems this peaceful life of thine,
Far less earthly than divine.

THE GRAVE IN THE BUSENTO.

FROM THE GERMAN OF AUGUST, COUNT VON PLATEN.

NIGHTLY by Busento's shores, when Cosenza's bells
are ringing,
One may hear the torrent answer, where the moonlit spray
is springing.

Yonder by the mist-veiled river warlike Goths walk to
and fro,
Uttering loud their lamentations, telling to the stars their
woe.

Alaric, their chief, is fallen! Never breathed a warrior
bolder,
With his locks, like sheen of north-light, gleaming from
each stalwart shoulder.

And beside the swift Busento sadly now his soldiers toil,
Delving with their pikes and halberds in the dark Lucanian
soil.

Thus they turn aside Busento from its deep and ancient
course,
While the eager waters help them, bursting through the
breach with force.

There, within the empty channel, in a grave both deep and wide,
They have placed him with his war-steed, — mute companions, side by side.

Thus they leave him with his treasure, underneath Busento's wave,
And henceforth the pale-flowered lotus strikes deep root in Alaric's grave.

For again they turn the river back into its wonted way,
Where its waters still are flowing, flowing till this very day.

Sang then loud those valiant warriors: "Sleep, of all earth's heroes best,
Where no Roman's greed for booty ever more may mar thy rest."

Sang until the echoes lifted to the winds the wild refrain,
And beneath the swift Busento since that day hath Alaric lain!

EVENING.

AFTER THE GERMAN.

PURPLE gleams the fir-clad hill-crest,
When the evening sun is low;
And the river, from its mute breast
Giveth back sweet Hesper's glow.

Like to room some friend has died in,
Seems the ancient aspen grove;
And we fancy ghosts abide in
Every branch the night winds move.

Thine the cheerful note, O cricket,
Thrills the pensive evening air,
Whilst the twilight wraps the thicket
And the bats flit here and there.

Wilt thou not, O shrill-voiced singer,
When in lowly grave I lie,
In the willow's branches linger,
Pouring forth thy melody!

Then my soul will list enchanted,
As it listens even now,
Whilst the flowers loved hands have planted
O'er my peaceful bed shall grow.

TO THE BUTTERFLY.

SILENTLY sailing the broad fields over,
Or resting thy wings on the thistle-bloom;
Feeding on air which the purple-topped clover
Inbreathes with the sweets of honeyed perfume;
Whither away, O dapple-winged rover?

There be that have thought thee the grub's risen spirit,
An emblem in time of the life that's eternal,
Which the just and the good after death inherit,
When they have passed to realms supernal,
And gained the reward their virtues merit.

But to me thou seem'st one of those mute sages,
Of whom 'tis writ in records olden,
Much blurred 'tis true by mould and rust of ages,
But showing still they hold true silence golden,
Whenever weighty thought the mind engages.

And yet, O speechless thing, I often wonder
Just what is passing in that tiny brain;
Dost thou on life's great questions ponder,
Till all thy thoughts become a tangled skein
That only Atropos can sunder?

O fly! in this vast universe of things,
Thou art an entity complete;
A miracle of wings and rings,
And one of earth's élite;
What better can we say of kings?

TO LYDIA.

HORACE, BOOK I, ODE VIII.

SAY, Lydia, by all the powers divine,
Why wastest thou young Sybaris' heart with love?
No more to martial deeds doth he incline
Who late his strength in glowing dust did prove.

Nor shares he with the knightly youth the race,
When Gallic coursers champ the bitted rein.
He fears the Tiber's flood; his manly face
Had rather with the viper's blood than olive stain.

Why will the youth who erstwhile threw the quoit
Beyond the mark, no longer prove to Mars
By what deft action, what sublime exploit,
He yet may write his name among the stars?

Why doth he hide when danger lurketh near,
As it is told of Thetis' recreant son,
Who watched Sarpedon's hosts with helpless fear
March on the walls of fated Ilion?

AT HÖLTY'S GRAVE.

FROM THE GERMAN OF NICOLAUS LENAU.

HÖLTY! thy friend, the Springtime, returneth!
Calling, he searcheth the hedges to find thee;
But vainly! his cries so importunate, in shadows are wasted!

No more do they greet him, the lays that thou sangest
Out of thy tender, susceptible spirit; no more
Thou rejoicest in violets early, nor the wood-dove's soft cooings.

Upon the green mound they have rounded above thee,
He falls, and embracing it, cries: "My singer,
Is dead!" And sadly the zephyr tells his grief to the flowers.

THE LOVE THAT NE'ER GROWS OLD.

NOT by a blind nude figure,
That draws its bow in the dark,
Transfixing with painful dart,
For want of a manlier mark,
Some simple maiden's heart,
Do we picture the love that is true,
The love that is constant and sure.

Such love came with creation's self,
Ere the first stars at morn did sing;
Warm is its breath, but refreshing.
Unlike the blind little elf,
It liveth the ages through.
It beareth no sting,
Nor like the slow-worm biteth,
But wheresoe'er it 'lighteth,
Drops healing from its wing.

RAINBOWS.

FROM THE GERMAN.

WHEN storms are passed and sunshine comes again,
How oft with varied tints the dun clouds gleam,
In gayest hues, like happy life-times, teem,
Although the skies still weep with ceaseless rain.

So human eyes oft smile midst blinding tears,
And joy makes dimples in the quivering lips,
Whilst still at Marah's stream the sad heart sips
And pains unspeakable in secret bears.

THE DUET.

FROM THE GERMAN OF ROBERT REINICK.

A LITTLE bird sat in an elder bush,
One beautiful night in May,
And underneath, in grasses lush,
A fair young maiden lay.
If the maiden sang, the bird was still;
If the maid was still, bird's notes were shrill,
And far away
Their roundelay
In the moonlit vale was heard alway.

What sang the bird in the elder tree,
That beautiful night in May?
And the maiden fair, of what sang she,
As in the grass she lay?
The bird he sang of blooming spring,
But of happy love the maid did sing,—
The thought that lay
Next her heart alway;
She'll sing it till her dying day.

THE SLEEPING LAKE.

FROM THE GERMAN.

'MIDST flowery banks at summer noontide sleeping,
How blue the skies are in thy depths, fair lake.
O mother-bird, close watch above thy nestlings keeping,
In tree-top high, do not its slumbers break.

The errant breezes from the hills stir lightly
The reeds that o'er their own reflections sigh;
And in the sunlight gleaming on the waters brightly,
Flits here and there the blue-winged dragon-fly.

SCANDAL'S TONGUE.

FROM THE GERMAN.

THOUGH scandal's tongue is never mute,
One thought should always comfort bring:
'Tis not the sour and crabbed fruit
That wasps delight the most to sting.

TO VENUS.

HORACE, BOOK I, ODE XXX.

O THOU, of Cnidus and of Paphos queen,
I pray thee leave thy Cyprus' shores of green;
Here Glycera, amid a brighter scene,
Doth lavish incense on thine altar burn.

Let Cupid and the Graces hereward haste,
And nymphs with locks depending to the waist,
And rosy youth, whose every thought is chaste,
And Mercury, whose feet the swift winds spurn.

THE CHIPMUNK.

UNDER the bole of a great pine tree
A chipmunk dwells, so blithe and free;
Merry little hermit,
Happy as the day,
So tame you almost catch him
Ere he slips away.

In a gloomy cavern, dark as Stygian night,
Liveth all alone this tiny eremite.
"Chipmunk, chipmunk;"
Thus he tells his name;
Ask him when you may,
'Twill always be the same.

Sitting in the sunshine, when the day is fine,
On a dainty hick'ry nut just about to dine;
"Chipmunk, chipmunk,"
How his eyes will glisten
As he hears you call him,
And cants his head to listen.

Chipmunk, chipmunk, so happy and so free,
Of something very strange, thou always mindest me;

Of something I can feel,
But cannot quite define; —
A sense of weird resemblance
Betwixt thy ways and mine.

Perchance in early ages, when time had just begun,
Our forebears owned their kinship as cousins-german, bun;
And hence it is I feel
For thee such fascination;
Thou art, indeed, my real,
Though distant, blood relation.

AN INCIDENT AT THE UNVEILING OF THE STATUE OF BURNS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF ROUMANIA. (CARMEN SYLVA.)

THE Highland bard, fair Scotia's pride,
Is borne unto the gráve 'midst tears;
But still the songs he used to sing
Will echo through the coming years;
And, that his fame may never die,
The sculptured rock his likeness wears.

And one whose lips are touched with fire,
Whene'er he speaks the name of Burns,
Tells of his brief, but chequered, life
To those who weep and smile by turns,—
How fame did find him at the plow,
And now his loss a nation mourns.

The poet's aged mother stood
With moistened eye, amid the throng,
And listened to the words of praise
Were lavished on the son of song;
And from her mother heart she heaved
A sigh of sorrow, deep and long.

But, when the veil had been withdrawn,
Till then around the statue thrown,
She called from out the startled crowd,
With hands upraised, in faltering tone:
"Ah, Robert! thou didst ask for bread,
And they have given thee a stone!"

A SUMMER NIGHT.

FROM THE GERMAN OF JOHANNA AMBROSIUS.

WITH wide extended arms night comes apace,
And holdeth vale and hill in soft embrace.

In silken robes enfoldeth bush and tree,
And all the weary world rests peacefully.

Oblivious now the earth of toilsome day,
What time the evening star puts forth its ray.

A bird, meanwhile, flies down the golden west;
So might my weary soul fly to its rest!

IN SPRING TIME.

AFTER THE GERMAN.

THE sweet skies laugh so blue, so blue,
And fields and woods are green,
And on the turf the tear-like dew
Is bathed in morning sheen.

For very joy the jocund spring
Wakes from its wintry sleep
To soar abroad on bluebird's wing,
Or with the young lambs leap.

O heart of mine! cast off thy gloom,
And with the spring awake;
Look! how the snowy apple-bloom
Is falling, flake by flake.

FREEZING.

FROM THE GERMAN OF JOHANNA AMBROSIUS.

I'M freezing in the fervent heat
That glows at sultry noon;
My heart for coldness scarce doth beat,
Although 'tis mild mid June.

I shiver by the blazing fire
With agues quite untold,
And ever, as the flames leap higher,
I feel I'm growing cold.

And, so, although the glow remains,
And warmth is round me shed,
The blood congeals in all my veins
Because my heart is dead.

RUHETHAL.

FROM THE GERMAN OF UHLAND.

AT eventide, when in the west,
The golden clouds like mountains rise,
Bold Alpine heights against the skies;
I often ask, with tear-dimmed sight,
If somewhere in those realms of light,
Doth lie the valley of my rest.

THE SUMMER COBWEB.

AFTER THE GERMAN.

INTO the fields two beings shy
Walked side by side in summer weather;
And as they walked, all silently,
A cobweb twined their hands together.

An omen of good sooth, thought they,
And let the fragile gyve remain;
For both their souls had felt for aye
The bondage of a silken chain.

And now the tale their lips ne'er told,
Their hearts in wild responsive beating,
Each to the other did unfold
Through palms that wildly thrilled at meeting.

If love be coy, then it should wait
The coming of the sign it needeth;
For come it will, or soon or late,
Like this frail thread a wind-gust speedeth.

TO PYRRHA.

HORACE, BOOK I, ODE V.

IN thy pleasant grotto, Pyrrha,
Dense with odors of the forest,
And the fragrance of fresh roses,
Who upon thy breast reposes?
Who this last youth thou adorest?

Deck thy dewy locks, O damsel,
For this latest, lealest lover,
With the amaranth and laurel;
While these last, may lovers' quarrel
Ne'er thy heartlessness discover!

While the wave the wild wind tosses,
And the white crests crown the billow,
Do not with his young heart trifle,
Nor thine own affection stifle;
Yield thy breast a willing pillow.

So he'll never know how changeful
Is thy love, prone to transition;
How, if one have ceased to please thee,
Other lover can appease thee
With a new love's sweet fruition.

In the temple of the sea-god,
  Down beside the surging ocean,
I have hung my wet apparel;
From this time, O maiden, farewell!
  Neptune claims my heart's devotion.

NOCTURNE.

AFTER THE GERMAN.

O MOON, fair moon, that shed'st the white
Enchantment of thy silvery light
Athwart the vale, and silently
Pursu'st thy pathway in the sky;

And you, ye stars, that pierce the blue,
O'erarching dome of midnight through,
And weave o'er earth a gleaming roof,
Of golden warp with silver woof;

How strange the thoughts that in me rise,
As I look upward to the skies!
A weird, wild sense of mystery
My spirit fills, I know not why!

TO THE RIVER.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

FLOW on, flow on, dear lays of mine,
To dark oblivion's sea,
Where no voice sings a passing line
In memory of me.

Ye sang of things were dear to me,
But now my love you spurn.
In water were ye writ; then flee,
And never more return.

TO MY CRONIES.

HORACE, EPODE XIII.

THE night without is dreary;
The stars are hid from view;
The wind sounds very weary,
As if it scarcely blew.

But here indoors 'tis cosy;
So never mind the storm;
The hearth-fire burns so rosy,
And we're so snug and warm.

We'll quaff the wine that's mellow,
And ancient webs festoon;
With it no jovial fellow
Will look for richer boon.

'Twas when my friend Torquatus
Was consul at old Rome
The wine-god breathed afflatus
Above the sparkling foam.

Nay, talk not shop, my brother;
The night to pleasure give;
For motto we've no other
Than live what time we live.

Your brows with perfume sprinkle;
This Persian nard employ;
So shall no vagrant wrinkle
The bloom of youth destroy.

Bring forth the lute and lyre,
And ply each tuneful string,
Till high, and ever higher,
Our hearts with rapture spring.

'Twas thus the Centaur, Chiron,
To young Achilles sung, —
That youth with thews of iron,
From gods and mortals sprung:

"The lands of Assaracus
And Troy's proud heights are thine;
The broad ancestral acres
Thou hast by right divine.

"A life of blissful leisure
There canst thou live alway;
Canst roam or rest at pleasure,
With none to say thee nay.

"But mind thee, demi-mortal,
The Fates have cut the thread
By which, through unseen portal,
Thy steps dame Thetis led.

"Nor power in earth or heaven
That thread shall reëntwine;
Therefore from morn till even
Thy heart to mirth incline.

"'Twere only wasteful folly
Thine eyes with grief to wet;
To vanquish melancholy
One should the word forget."

UNDECEIVED.

FROM THE GERMAN OF JOHANNA AMBROSIUS.

I FOUND a pearl upon the strand
I felt full rich to own,
But when I held it in my hand,
It proved a pebble-stone.

I went to pluck a bright red rose,
As fragrant as the spring,
But when my fingers held it close,
I knew it had a sting.

One heart there was I thought divine,
And tenderly did prize,
But when I pressed that heart to mine,
I found it cold as ice.

SONNETS.

A PRESAGE OF IMMORTALITY.

HORACE, BOOK III, ODE XXX.

LO! I have builded for myself a name
More durable than bronze, and loftier than
The Pyramids. Nor time nor tempest can
Uproot the sure foundations of my fame.
I shall not wholly die; this transient frame,
O'er which the demon Change hath breathed the ban
Of certain death, is not the whole of man.
Long as the vestal trims the sacred flame,
Or Aufidus and Daunus roll their tide,
Posterity will name my name with praise
Because Æolic verse, in elder days,
To the Italian measures I applied.
Melpomene, thine be the honor rare
To twine the Delphic laurel in my hair.

FRINGED GENTIANS.

THEIR azure cups are of a deeper hue
Than violets wear, beside the brooks in May,
Or blue-eyed grasses, wondering all the day,
Why summer skies, like their own orbs, are blue.
They bloom when hoar-frosts come instead of dew,
And touch with vermeil tints the maple's spray,
And not till wintry blasts have blown away
The last winged seeds, they bid the year adieu.
At day's decline their purple eyelids close,
For then, like mortal folk, they take their rest;
But when the sun in noon's pale amber glows,
And in the haze upon the mountain's crest,
The saffron tints commingle with the rose,
They wake again by brisk young winds caressed.

AUTUMN.

OF russet leaves and wailing winds the time:
The cricket by the evening hearth-fire fills
The house with chirpings shrill, and o'er the hills,
Throughout the day, the Year, though past his prime,
Still walks his tireless way. To sunnier clime
Have all the song-birds flown, and by the rills,
Upon whose banks the summer dew distills,
Now morning finds long lines of snowy rime.
The varied hues the flowers in springtime wore,
But more subdued, the wide-spread forests wear,
Presaging thus that soon the leaves must fall,
Where now the light winds play, the tempest's roar
Be heard, and all the fields lie brown and bare
Beneath the sentry crow's discordant call.

SEPTEMBER DAYS.

LIGHT fleecy clouds float in pale amethyst,
And from the depths of the illimitable blue,
The steel-gray light, that pierceth all space through,
Their fluffy rims with icy lips hath kissed.
And where the harvest lands are bathed in mist
By morning sun distilled from last night's dew,
That glints the webs where noiseless shuttles flew
All through the hours of moonlit elfin tryst,
The husband man doth garner in his gains,
And for his sowing glean a-many fold,
And joy in melody of groaning wains;
For yellow sheaves to him are virgin gold,
The best of guerdons for the countless pains
That blanch his brow; and so he groweth old.

OCTOBER.

NOW turns the golden-rod to ashen brown;
The hare's-foot clover fades beside the way;
And freakish winds that with pale asters play,
The thistles tufted seeds have broadcast sown.
The robin-redbreasts to the south have flown,
And left the leafless orchards to the jay;
For soon his icy palm will winter lay
Upon the earth and change its brow to stone.
And yet who sees from mountain heights at noon
The varied brilliance of the sunlit trees,
Hung far and wide with many a gay festoon,
And all their branches waving in the breeze,
May still imagine that the month is June,
And each bright leaf a glint of sunlit seas.

MOONLIGHT NIGHT IN NOVEMBER.

O WEIRD and wan and full of mystery
The moonlight seems—impalpable and white;
And every star, some hoary acolyte
That bears his flaring torch along the sky.
Like dark inquisitors—whose history
In letters black on page of lurid white
We read with dread in silence of the night—
The tall trees stand, and through their branches sigh
The lonesome winds,—not blow with firm, full breath
Like things that have the living earth for home
And dwell thereon with joy of healthful being,
But like loud whispers from the vale of death,
Or owlet's hooting in some hollow tomb,
From whence unshriven ghosts are hourly fleeing.

A WINTER'S DAY.

THE snow gleams wanly in the sun at noon,
And hollow winds around the lattice moan;
Then die away in plaintive undertone,
Like some gray minstrel singing out of tune
Of direful deeds that happened 'neath the moon
In days of eld; then rise again like lone
And disembodied souls that ne'er have known
Enough of earth-life, having died too soon
To taste its fullest bliss, and now a voice
In these wild winds have found, wherewith to plead
For one brief hour of mortal living more —
What though its cares do far exceed its joys —
Ere they be numbered with the other dead,
And dwell for aye on time's remotest shore.

THE PANTHEIST.

THE boundless universe is but God's thought,
And all that is doth emanate from Him;
And though we fly unto the outmost rim
Of space, and dwell upon the brink of nought,
E'en there, the ether that we breathe is fraught
With God; and as amidst the chaos dim,
Vast travailing shapes before our visions swim,
We can but feel that Power Supreme hath wrought
A miracle so grand, and dwells therein.
And when o'er all the mighty jar and din
Of moving worlds, are borne upon our ears
Such strains sublime as need no rhythmic law,
Who wonders if we bow our souls in awe,
Our worship hence the anthem of the spheres!

"MORE sinned against than sinning." This excuse,
So often urged in their behalf whom Fate
Foredooms to wrath ere soul and substance mate
In this poor human frame, can we refuse
To her whose fair young neck the hangman's noose
Enclosed from birth? who, like the desolate,
Despairing souls by Acheron that wait
For want of Charon's fee, might well confuse
The finer shades of moral wrong and right?
And yet what aptitude for all that's good,
What opulence of sweet unselfishness,
Finding in others' weal her chief delight!
Despite thy frailties and one deed of blood,
We still must love thee, Fate's fair martyr, Tess!

MOONLIGHT.

FROM THE DUTCH OF EDUARD BROM.

THE hallowed night in solemn silence broods
Above the dusk and lowly breathing earth ;
And queen-like, midst her airy solitudes,
The moon, with retinue of stars, comes forth.
Clear-white the light whose liquid cadence floods
All space since first the morning stars had birth,
Light out of light, that in its frolic moods,
Illumines Night's dark brow with silver mirth.
The beaming laugh of beauty in mine ear,
I rather, with my soul-sense, feel than hear,
Henceforth in flowery fields of light I stray.
And thus, reclining 'neath thy glory-shield,
O moon, my soul for very light concealed,
I bide content the breaking of the day.

CARPE DIEM.

HORACE, BOOK I, ODE XI.

ASK not my Leuconoë, I entreat,
What length of days the Gods for us ordain;
Especially I beg, thou wouldst refrain
To ask the Babylonians of the street.
Accept whatever fate decrees, — 'tis meet.
If many winters to us still remain,
Or only this that sweeps the Tuscan main,
Causing its waves upon our shores to beat,
We still should store our wines and gauge our hopes
To life, that, at the most, is but a span.
E'en as we speak, the untried future opes.
Improve the day that is; no more we can.
Through all the years of life one blindly gropes;
The gods dispose, how much soe'er we plan.

MIDSUMMER.

SEASON of fulness and the fruitful vine ;
Now Ceres, doomed through countless years to wait,
Grief-stricken o'er a long lost daughter's fate,
Delves earth's dark depths again for Proserpine ;
And Flora, as the fleeting days decline,
Her lip and cheek no longer roseate,
As when, in spring, by purling rills she sate,
The sceptre to Pomona doth resign.
Athwart the sunlit landscape languorously,
The warm winds wafted from a southern sky,
Would scarcely lift the drowsing butterfly
From off the clover-bloom, whereon the gleam
Of gauzy wings betrays him, lost in dream,
A mote that drifteth down life's languid stream.

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